

OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT



INTRODUCTION

The Open Space and Conservation Element is concerned with protecting and preserving natural resources, preserving open space areas, managing the production of commodity resources, protecting and enhancing cultural resources, and providing recreational opportunities.

The Open Space and Conservation Element sets out goals, policies, and implementation measures under three main headings: Productive Resources, Natural Resources, and Recreation and Cultural Resources. Productive Resources encompasses three sections: Water Resources; Forest Resources; and Mineral Resources. Natural Resources encompasses four sections: Wetland and Riparian Areas; Fish and Wildlife Habitat; Vegetation; and Air Quality. Finally, Recreation and Cultural Resources encompasses five sections: Parks and Recreation; Recreational Trails; Historic; Cultural; and Geologic Resources; Scenic Resources; and Scenic Roadways.

PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

A. WATER RESOURCES

Fresno County is large and geographically diverse. The mountainous eastern region of the county receives up to 70 inches of precipitation annually, mostly in snowfall. Many small mountain lakes and streams in this region are tributaries to the San Joaquin and Kings Rivers which flow into the Central Valley. The valley and western portions of the county, by contrast, are extremely arid, with less than 10 inches of annual rainfall. Groundwater conditions and quality vary widely across the county.

There are a number of factors affecting the county's existing water resources. Throughout much of the county, groundwater is in a state of overdraft. In some county areas, contamination from natural or manmade sources has reduced groundwater quality such that its use requires treatment. Supplies of imported surface water have been reduced due to changing regulations, and there is growing pressure to allow long-term transfers of water out of the county. Finally, there is the increase in water demand that will accompany the county's anticipated growth.

Policies in this section seek to protect and enhance the surface water and groundwater resources in the county. The policies address broad water planning issues, groundwater recharge, the relationship of land use decisions to water issues, and water quality problems. Related policies are included in Section HS-C, Flood Hazards; Section PF-C, Water Supply and Delivery; Section PF-E, Storm Drainage and Flood Control; Section OS-D, Wetland and Riparian Areas; and Section LU-C, River Influence Areas. Other relevant policies are included in the Kings River Regional Plan.

Goal OS-A To protect and enhance the water quality and quantity in Fresno County's streams, creeks, and groundwater basins.

Definitions for the Open Space and Conservation Element

Archeological: Relating to the material remains of past human life, culture, or activities.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): A State law requiring the State and local agencies to regulate activities with consideration for environmental protection. If a proposed activity has the potential for a significant adverse environmental impact, an environmental impact report (EIR) must be prepared and certified as to its adequacy before taking action on the proposed project.

Commercial Recreation Facilities: Facilities serving recreational needs but operated for private profit (e.g., riding stables, tourist attractions, amusement parks).

Conservation: The management of natural resources to prevent waste, destruction, or neglect.

Geological: Pertaining to rock or solid matter.

Habitat: The natural environment of a plant or animal.

Open Space Land: Any parcel or area of land or water that is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use for the purposes of: 1) the preservation of natural resources; 2) the managed production of resources; 3) outdoor recreation; or 4) public health and safety.

Rare or Endangered Species: A species of animal or plant listed in Sections 670.2 or 670.5, Title 14, California Administrative Code or Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 17.11 or Section 17.2, pursuant to the Federal Endangered Species Act designating species as rare, threatened, or endangered.

Riparian Habitat: The land and plants bordering a watercourse or lake.

River or Stream: A natural watercourse as designated by a solid line or dash and three dots symbol shown on the United States Geological Survey map most recently published, or any well-defined channel with distinguishable bed and bank that shows evidence of having contained flowing water as indicated by scourer deposit of rock, sand, gravel, soil, or debris.

Scenic Vista: An area designated, signed, and accessible to the public for purposes of viewing and sightseeing.

Vernal Pool: Ephemeral wetlands that form in shallow depressions in the ground which are underlain by a substrate that restricts water percolation. These depressions fill with rainwater during the fall and winter and can remain inundated until spring or early summer.

Watercourse: Natural or once natural flowing (perennially or intermittently) water including rivers, streams, and creeks. Includes natural waterways that have been channelized, but does not include manmade channels, ditches, and underground drainage and sewage systems.

Watershed: The total area above a given point on a watercourse that contributes water to the flow of the watercourse; the entire region drained by a watercourse.

Wetland: Areas that are permanently wet or periodically covered with shallow water, such as saltwater and freshwater marshes, open or closed brackish marshes, swamps, mud flats, vernal pools, and fens. This also includes wetlands under the jurisdiction of the US Army Corps of Engineers which encompasses vernal pools and other areas with hydrology, soils, and vegetation meeting Federal regulatory standards.

Policies

General

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| Policy OS-A.1 | The County shall develop, implement, and maintain a plan for achieving water resource sustainability, including a strategy to address overdraft and the needs of anticipated growth. |
| Policy OS-A.2 | The County shall provide active leadership in the regional coordination of water resource management efforts affecting Fresno County and shall continue to monitor and participate in, as appropriate, regional activities affecting water resources, groundwater, and water quality. |
| Policy OS-A.3 | The County shall provide active leadership in efforts to protect, enhance, monitor, and manage groundwater resources within its boundaries. |
| Policy OS-A.4 | The County shall update, implement, and maintain its Groundwater Management Plan. |
| Policy OS-A.5 | The County shall support efforts to create additional water storage that benefits Fresno County, and is economically, environmentally, and technically feasible. |
| Policy OS-A.6 | The County shall develop a repository for the collection of County water resource information and shall establish and maintain a centralized water resource database. The database shall incorporate surface and groundwater data and provide for the public dissemination of water resource information. |
| Policy OS-A.7 | The County shall develop and maintain a water budget (i.e., an accounting of all inflows and outflows of water into a specified area) for the County to aid in the determination of existing and future water resource needs. The water budget shall be incorporated into the County Geographic Information System (GIS) and included in the water resource database. |
| Policy OS-A.8 | The County shall develop, implement, and maintain a program for monitoring groundwater quantity and quality within its boundaries. The results of the program shall be reported annually and shall be included in the water resource database. |
| Policy OS-A.9 | The County shall develop and maintain an inventory of sites within the County that are suitable for groundwater recharge. The sites shall be incorporated into the County GIS and included in the water resource database. |
| Policy OS-A.10 | The County shall develop and implement public education programs designed to increase public participation in water conservation and water quality awareness. |

Groundwater Recharge

Policy OS-A.11 The County shall encourage, where economically, environmentally, and technically feasible, efforts aimed at directly or indirectly recharging the County's groundwater.

Policy OS-A.12 The County shall support and/or engage in water banking (i.e., recharge and subsequent extraction for direct and/or indirect use on lands away from the recharge area) based on the following criteria:

- a. The amount of extracted water will never exceed the amount recharged;
- b. The water banking program will result in no net loss of water resources within Fresno County;
- c. The water banking program will not have a negative impact on other water users within Fresno County;
- d. The water banking program will not create, increase, or spread groundwater contamination; and
- e. The water banking program includes sponsorship, monitoring, and reporting by a local public agency;
- f. The groundwater banking program will not cause or increase land subsidence;
- g. The water banking program will not have a negative impact on agriculture within Fresno County; and
- h. The water banking program will provide a net benefit to Fresno County.

Policy OS-A.13 The County shall, to the maximum extent possible, maintain local groundwater management authority and pursue the elimination of unwarranted institutional, regulatory, permitting, and policy barriers to groundwater recharge within Fresno County.

Policy OS-A.14 The County shall permit and encourage, where economically, environmentally, and technically feasible, over-irrigation of surface water as a means to maximize groundwater recharge.

Policy OS-A.15 The County shall directly and/or indirectly participate in the development, implementation, and maintenance of a program to recharge the aquifers underlying the county. The program shall make use of flood and other waters to offset existing and future groundwater pumping.

Land Use

Policy OS-A.16 The County shall require that natural watercourses are integrated into new development in such a way that they are accessible to the public and provide a positive visual element and a buffer area between waterways and urban development in an effort to protect water quality and riparian areas.

Policy OS-A.17 The County shall require the protection of floodplain lands and, where appropriate, acquire public easements for purposes of flood protection, public safety, wildlife preservation, groundwater recharge, access, and recreation.

Policy OS-A.18 The County shall support the policies of the San Joaquin River Parkway Plan to protect the San Joaquin River as an aquatic habitat, recreational amenity, aesthetic resource, and water source. (See Policy OS-H.12)

Policy OS-A.19 The County shall, where economically, environmentally, and technically feasible, encourage the multiple use of public lands, including County lands, to include groundwater recharge.

Policy OS-A.20 The County shall not approve the creation of new parcels that rely on the use of septic systems of a design not found in the California Plumbing Code.

Water Quality

Policy OS-A.21 The County shall protect groundwater resources from contamination and overdraft by pursuing the following efforts:

- a. Identifying and controlling sources of potential contamination;
- b. Protecting important groundwater recharge areas;
- c. Encouraging water conservation efforts and supporting the use of surface water for urban and agricultural uses wherever feasible;
- d. Encouraging the use of treated wastewater for groundwater recharge and other purposes (e.g., irrigation, landscaping, commercial, and non-domestic uses);
- e. Supporting consumptive use where it can be demonstrated that this use does not exceed safe yield and is appropriately balanced with surface water supply to the same area;
- f. Considering areas where recharge potential is determined to be high for designation as open space; and
- g. Developing conjunctive use of surface and groundwater.

Policy OS-A.22 The County shall require new development near rivers, creeks, reservoirs, or substantial aquifer recharge areas to mitigate any potential impacts of release of pollutants in storm waters, flowing river, stream, creek, or reservoir waters.

Policy OS-A.23 The County shall minimize sedimentation and erosion through control of grading, cutting of trees, removal of vegetation, placement of roads and bridges, and use of off-road vehicles. The County shall discourage grading activities during the rainy season unless adequately mitigated to avoid sedimentation of creeks and damage to riparian habitat.

Policy OS-A.24 The County shall continue to require the use of feasible and practical best management practices (BMPs) to protect streams from the adverse effects of construction activities and urban runoff.

Policy OS-A.25 The County shall monitor water quality regularly and take necessary measures to prevent contamination, including the prevention of hazardous materials from entering the wastewater system.

Policy OS-A.26 The County shall only approve new wastewater treatment facilities that will not result in degradation of surface water or groundwater. The County shall generally require treatment to tertiary or higher levels.

Policy OS-A.27 In areas with increased potential for groundwater degradation (e.g., areas with prime percolation capabilities, coarse soils, and/or shallow groundwater), the County shall only approve land uses with low risk of degrading groundwater.

Policy OS-A.28 The County shall support efforts to require the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to provide San Joaquin Valley agricultural drainage facilities as intended in the authorization of the Central Valley Project.

Implementation Programs

Program OS-A.A The County shall develop, implement and maintain a water sustainability plan (see Policy OS-A.1).

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 01-02; Ongoing

Program OS-A.B The County shall establish and maintain a centralized water resource database for surface and groundwater that includes the water budget, groundwater monitoring data, and the groundwater recharge site inventory. (See Policies OS-A.6 through OS-A.9)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 01-02; Ongoing

Program OS-A.C The County shall develop, implement and maintain a groundwater monitoring program. (See Policy OS-A.8)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 01-02; Ongoing

Program OS-A.D The County shall develop, implement, and maintain to preserve for recharge purpose those lands identified as suitable for groundwater recharge in the water resource database inventory.

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 02-03

B. FOREST RESOURCES

Almost all of the lands available for timber production in Fresno County lie within the southern part of the Sierra National Forest and the northern portion of the Sequoia National Forest. Timber from these areas is the only long-term supply for the local wood product industry. The challenge to Fresno County is to maintain current timber production operations without jeopardizing one of its most valuable natural assets—its forests.

Policies in this section seek to protect forestry resources by encouraging productive use of forest land, carefully managing the forest ecosystem, protecting forest resources, discouraging the development of land uses that conflict with timberland management, and encouraging participation in the Timberland Production Zone program. Related policies are included in Section OS-E, Fish and Wildlife Habitat, and Section OS-F, Vegetation.

Goal OS-B To maintain healthy, sustainable forests in Fresno County, conserve forest resources, enhance the quality and diversity of forest ecosystems, reduce conflicts between forestry and other uses, encourage a sustained yield of forest products, protect and conserve lands identified as suitable for commercial timber production within the county, and conserve forest lands that have other resource values including recreation, grazing, watershed, and wildlife habitats.

Policies

- Policy OS-B.1 The County shall encourage the sustained productive use of forest land as a means of providing open space and conserving natural resources.
- Policy OS-B.2 The County shall work closely with agencies involved in the management of forest ecosystems and shall coordinate with State and Federal agencies, private landowners, and private preservation/conservation groups in habitat preservation and protection of rare, endangered, threatened, and special concern species, to ensure consistency in efforts and to encourage joint planning and development of areas to be preserved. The County shall encourage State and Federal agencies to give notice to and coordinate with the County on any pending, contemplated, or proposed actions affecting local communities and citizens of the County. The County will encourage State and Federal agencies to address adverse impacts on citizens and communities of Fresno County, including environmental, health, safety, private property, and economic impacts.
- Policy OS-B.3 The County shall coordinate with agencies involved in the regulation of timber harvest operations to ensure that County conservation goals are achieved.
- Policy OS-B.4 The County shall review all proposed timber harvest plans and shall request that the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the US Forest Service amend the plans to address public safety concerns, such as requiring alternate haul routes if use of proposed haul routes would jeopardize public safety or result in damage to public or private roads.
- Policy OS-B.5 The County shall encourage and promote the productive use of wood waste generated in the county.
- Policy OS-B.6 The County shall encourage and support conservation programs to reforest private timberlands.
- Policy OS-B.7 The County shall protect forest resources for the production of timber resources and related activities.

- Policy OS-B.8 The County shall discourage the development of land uses that conflict with timberland management.
- Policy OS-B.9 The County shall encourage qualified landowners to enroll in the Timberland Production Zone program, pursuant to the Timberland Productivity Act of 1982.
- Policy OS-B.10 The County shall maintain Timberland Production designations. Rezoning from the Timberland Production Zone District shall be based on criteria and procedures in accordance with the State Forest Taxation Reform Act and the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance.
- Policy OS-B.11 The County shall require parcels removed from the Timberland Production Zone in accordance with the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance to revert to the Resource Conservation Zone District. Removal from the Timberland Production Zone District shall be effective ten (10) years from the date the rezoning is approved or as otherwise specified by the State Forest Taxation Reform Act.

Implementation Programs

- Program OS-B.A The County, in consultation with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, shall conduct a careful evaluation of the Forest Practice Rules with regard to: clearcutting and other forest management practices with potential visual impacts; use of prescribed burning; protection of biological, soil, and water resources; and protection of old growth forest in Fresno County. If the Forest Practice Rules are determined to be inadequate, a compilation of Special Forest Practice Rules for Fresno County shall be proposed to the Board of Forestry to address those inadequacies. (See Policies OS-B.2 and OS-B.3)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 03-04

- Program OS-B.B The County shall encourage the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to complete an inventory of existing and residual stands of ancient and old growth forest on private timberlands in Fresno County. The results of this inventory shall be incorporated into the County's biological resources database for use in future land use planning decisions. (See Policy OS-B.2)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 03-04

- Program OS-B.C The County shall encourage the U.S. Forest Service and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to identify potential impacts on, and the need for preservation of, old growth forest in Fresno County. (See Policy OS-B.2)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 03-04

Program OS-B.D The County shall formally request that the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection include educational materials for residents in its Notice of Intent to Harvest Timber. Such materials should include information concerning the Forest Practice Act, Forest Practice Rules, and Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Timber Harvest Plan review process. (See Policy OS-B.2)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 03-04

C. MINERAL RESOURCES

Fresno County has been a leading producer of minerals because of the abundance and wide variety of mineral resources that are present in the county. Extracted resources include aggregate products (sand and gravel), fossil fuels (oil and coal), metals (chromite, copper, gold, mercury, and tungsten), and other minerals used in construction or industrial applications (asbestos, high-grade clay, diatomite, granite, gypsum, and limestone). Aggregate and petroleum are the county's most significant extractive resources and play an important role in maintaining the county's overall economy.

Policies in this section intend to preserve the future availability of its mineral resources. In addition, policies in this section seek to promote the orderly extraction of mineral resources while minimizing the impact of these activities on surrounding land uses and the natural environment. Related policies are included in Section LU-C, River Influence Areas. Other relevant policies are included in the Kings River Regional Plan.

Goal OS-C To conserve areas identified as containing significant mineral deposits and oil and gas resources for potential future use, while promoting the reasonable, safe, and orderly operation of mining and extraction activities within areas designated for such use, where environmental, aesthetic, and adjacent land use compatibility impacts can be adequately mitigated.

Policies

Minerals

- Policy OS-C.1 The County shall not permit incompatible land uses within the impact area of existing or potential surface mining areas.
- Policy OS-C.2 The County shall not permit land uses incompatible with mineral resource recovery within areas designated as Mineral Resource Zone 2 (MRZ-2). (See Figures 7-9, 7-10, and 7-11 in Fresno County General Plan Background Report).
- Policy OS-C.3 The County shall require that the operation and reclamation of surface mines be consistent with the State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) and special zoning ordinance provisions.
- Policy OS-C.4 The County shall impose conditions as necessary to minimize or eliminate the potential adverse impact of mining operations on surrounding properties.

- Policy OS-C.5 The County shall require reclamation of all surface mines consistent with SMARA and the County's implementing ordinance.
- Policy OS-C.6 The County shall accept California Land Conservation (Williamson Act) contracts on land identified by the State as containing significant mineral deposits subject to the use and acreage limitations established by the County.
- Policy OS-C.7 The County shall require that new non-mining land uses adjacent to existing mining operations be designed to provide a buffer between the new development and the mining operations. The buffer distance shall be based on an evaluation of noise, aesthetics, drainage, operating conditions, biological resources, topography, lighting, traffic, operating hours, and air quality.
- Policy OS-C.8 The County shall, where feasible along the San Joaquin River, site recreational trails, bikeways, and other recreation areas at least three hundred (300) feet from the edge of active aggregate mining operations and separate them by physical barriers. Recreational trail/bikeway crossings of active haul routes should be avoided whenever possible; if crossings of haul routes are necessary, separate where feasible.
- Policy OS-C.9 The County shall require that any proposed changes in land use within areas designated MRZ-2 along the San Joaquin and Kings Rivers comply with the provisions of the State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA).
- Policy OS-C.10 The County shall not permit land uses that threaten the future availability of mineral resource or preclude future extraction of those resources.
- Policy OS-C.11 The County shall undertake a comprehensive, watershed-based planning effort to assess future extraction of the aggregate resources and recreation uses along the Kings River as a part of an update of the Kings River Regional Plan. Such a planning effort would help to facilitate use of the resource while protecting other Kings River watershed resources and functions, including floodplain areas. (See Policy OS-H.10, Policy LU-C.4, and Program LU-C.A)

Oil and Gas

- Policy OS-C.12 Fresno County shall be divided into three areas for the regulation of oil and gas development.
- a. Urban areas including all land within one-fourth mile of the planned urban boundaries shown on adopted community plans.
 - b. Established oil and gas fields as determined and updated by the California Division of Oil and Gas, excluding urban areas except where specifically included in these policies.
 - c. Non-urban areas including all land not within either established oil and gas fields or urban areas. A non-urban area's designation shall be changed to an established oil and gas field designation upon: (1) its identification by the Division of Oil and Gas as an oil and gas field, and (2) subsequent approval by the County.

Policy OS-C.13 The County shall require a special permit for certain oil and gas activities and facilities as specifically noted in the Oil and Gas Development Matrix (Table OS-C.1) due to their potential significant adverse effects on surrounding land or land uses.

Policy OS-C.14 The County shall permit by right small-scale oil and gas activities and facilities that can be demonstrated to not have a significant adverse effect on surrounding or adjacent land uses in an established oil and gas field, an established oil and gas field in urban areas, or non-urban areas.

Policy OS-C.15 The County may permit oil refineries to locate within areas designated by the General Plan for industrial uses. Limited oil refining plants may be permitted to locate in non-urban areas provided: the plant is limited to only fractionating and blending operations; the plant is within an established oil and gas field or within one mile of the exterior boundary of each of two (2) or more noncontiguous oil and gas fields; the site has access to both natural gas and crude oil transmission pipelines and a system of feeder pipelines from nearby gas and oil fields; the plant is limited to a refining capacity of fifteen thousand (15,000) barrels of crude oil per day; and the site has been previously used for refining purposes.

Policy OS-C.16 The County shall require manufacturing and marketing activities and facilities that serve the petroleum industry to be located in the appropriate areas designated by the General Plan.

Policy OS-C.17 The County shall require the timely reclamation of oil and gas development sites upon termination of such activities to facilitate the conversion of the land to its primary land use as designated by the General Plan.

Policy OS-C.18 The County shall establish procedures to ensure that exploration and recovery of mineral resources, including oil and natural gas, will occur under appropriate locational and operational standards within areas designated Agriculture and Westside Rangeland.

Policy OS-C.19 The County shall require non-petroleum-related discretionary projects proposed on abandoned oil fields to demonstrate that abandonment and cleanup have taken place in compliance with regulations administered by the State Division of Oil and Gas (California Public Resources Code Section 23000 et seq.) as a part of the due diligence procedures.

Policy OS-C.20 The County shall not allow any building intended for human occupancy to be located near any active petroleum well unless suitable safety and fire protection measures and setbacks are approved by the local fire district.

Implementation Programs

None indicated beyond existing programs.

TABLE OS-C.1				
OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT MATRIX				
Major Activities and Facilities		Urban Areas	Established Oil and Gas Fields	Non-Urban Areas
Oil and Gas Exploration, Drilling, and Production				
	Exploratory and Production Drilling	○	●	○
	Drill Site and Pumping Equipment	○	●	○
	Production Tanks and Gauging Facilities	○	●	○
	Produced Water Treatment Facilities	○	●	○
	Production Separators (Oil-Gas-Water)	○	●	○
	Oil Field Service Lines	○	●	○
Oil and Gas Field Operations				
	Gas Compressor or Absorption Plant	○	○	○
	Steam Injection Plant	○	○	○
	Other Secondary and Tertiary Recovery Facilities	○	○	○
	Oil Cleaning Plant	X	○	○
	Natural Gas Processing Plants	X	○	○
	LPG Storage	X	○	○
	Major Petroleum Transmission and Trunk Lines	X	○	○
	Tank Farms	X	○	○
	Pumping Plants	X	○	○
Oil and Gas Auxiliary Operations				
	Offices	X	○	X
	Shops	X	○	X
	Laboratories	X	○	X
	Work Camp Living Facilities	X	○	X
	Storage Yards and Storage Facilities	X	○	X
	Oil Well Services	X	○	X
	Oil Refineries	X	X	X
	Limited Oil Refining Plants	X	○	○
● Permitted by Right ○ Subject to Special Permit X Not Permitted				

NATURAL RESOURCES

D. WETLAND AND RIPARIAN AREAS

The rivers and streams that flow from the Sierra Nevada mountains historically meandered through broad floodplains in the San Joaquin Valley. Because of urbanization and agriculture, these broad floodplains have

been restricted to narrower belts along the rivers and streams or otherwise modified for flood control. Within this modified landscape, remaining riparian habitat is of great value to resident and migratory animal species as it provides corridors and linkages to and from the biotic regions of the county. The numerous essential habitat elements provided by the remaining riparian/riverine corridors in Fresno County make them perhaps the most significant contributor to wildlife habitat throughout the county.

The San Joaquin Valley area of Fresno County still contains large wetlands and wildlife refuge areas, while the foothills east of the city of Fresno contain vernal pools. These areas support many specialized plant and animal species.

Policies in this section seek to protect riparian and wetland habitats in the county while allowing compatible uses where appropriate. Related policies are included in Section LU-C, River Influence Areas; Section OS-A, Water Resources; Section OS-E, Fish and Wildlife Habitat; and Section OS-F, Vegetation.

Goal OS-D To conserve the function and values of wetland communities and related riparian areas throughout Fresno County while allowing compatible uses where appropriate. Protection of these resource functions will positively affect aesthetics, water quality, floodplain management, ecological function, and recreation/tourism.

Policies

- Policy OS-D.1 The County shall support the “no-net-loss” wetlands policies of the US Army Corps of Engineers, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Department of Fish and Game. Coordination with these agencies at all levels of project review shall continue to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures and the concerns of these agencies are adequately addressed.
- Policy OS-D.2 The County shall require new development to fully mitigate wetland loss for function and value in regulated wetlands to achieve "no-net-loss" through any combination of avoidance, minimization, or compensation. The County shall support mitigation banking programs that provide the opportunity to mitigate impacts to rare, threatened, and endangered species and/or the habitat which supports these species in wetland and riparian areas.
- Policy OS-D.3 The County shall require development to be designed in such a manner that pollutants and siltation do not significantly degrade the area, value, or function of wetlands. The County shall require new developments to implement the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to aid in this effort.

- Policy OS-D.4 The County shall require riparian protection zones around natural watercourses and shall recognize that these areas provide highly valuable wildlife habitat. Riparian protection zones shall include the bed and bank of both low- and high-flow channels and associated riparian vegetation, the band of riparian vegetation outside the high-flow channel, and buffers of 100 feet in width as measured from the top of the bank of unvegetated channels and 50 feet in width as measured from the outer edge of the dripline of riparian vegetation.
- Policy OS-D.5 The County shall strive to identify and conserve remaining upland habitat areas adjacent to wetland and riparian areas that are critical to the feeding, hibernation, or nesting of wildlife species associated with these wetland and riparian areas.
- Policy OS-D.6 The County shall require new private or public developments to preserve and enhance existing native riparian habitat unless public safety concerns require removal of habitat for flood control or other purposes. In cases where new private or public development results in modification or destruction of riparian habitat for purposes of flood control, the developers shall be responsible for creating new riparian habitats within or near the project area. Adjacency to the project area shall be defined as being within the same watershed sub-basin as the project site. Compensation shall be at a ratio of three (3) acres of new habitat for every one (1) acre destroyed.
- Policy OS-D.7 The County shall support the management of wetland and riparian plant communities for passive recreation, groundwater recharge, nutrient storage, and wildlife habitats.
- Policy OS-D.8 The County should consider the acquisition of wetland, meadows, and riparian habitat areas for parks limited to passive recreational activities as a method of wildlife conservation.

Implementation Programs

- Program OS-D.A The County shall work toward the acquisition by public agencies or private non-profit conservation organizations of creek corridors, wetlands, and areas rich in wildlife or of a fragile ecological nature as public open space where such areas cannot be effectively preserved through the regulatory process. Such protection may take the form of fee acquisition or protective easements and may be carried out in cooperation with other local, State, and Federal agencies and private entities. Acquisition shall include provisions for maintenance and management in perpetuity. (See Policies OS-D.2 and OS-D.8)
- Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: Ongoing
- Program OS-D.B The County shall adopt an ordinance for riparian protection zones identifying allowable activities in riparian protection zones and allowable mitigation techniques. (See Policy OS-D.4)
- Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 02-03

E. FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Fresno County is unique among California counties in the range of habitats that it encompasses. The County cuts an east/west cross-section across central California that includes the spine of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, the Central Valley, and a small portion of the inner Coast Range. Fresno County's different regions can be described in terms of 29 distinct habitat types based on the composition and structure of vegetation found in each area. Within these habitats, there is a close relationship between natural vegetation and wildlife. The disruption of natural vegetation areas alters the food chain upon which many animals are dependent. The preservation of natural vegetation areas is ,therefore, key abundance and well-being of many wildlife species.

Policies in this section seek to protect natural areas and to preserve the diversity of habitat in the county. Related policies are included in Section OS-A, Water Resources; Section OS-B, Forest Resources; Section OS-D, Wetland and Riparian Areas; Section OS-F, Vegetation; and Section LU-C, River Influence Areas.

Goal OS-E To help protect, restore, and enhance habitats in Fresno County that support fish and wildlife species so that populations are maintained at viable levels.

Policies

Policy OS-E.1 The County shall support efforts to avoid the “net” loss of important wildlife habitat where practicable. In cases where habitat loss cannot be avoided, the County shall impose adequate mitigation for the loss of wildlife habitat that is critical to supporting special-status species and/or other valuable or unique wildlife resources. Mitigation shall be at sufficient ratios to replace the function, and value of the habitat that was removed or degraded. Mitigation maybe achieved through any combination of creation, restoration, conservation easements, and/or mitigation banking. Conservation easements should include provisions for maintenance and management in perpetuity. The County shall recommend coordination with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures and the concerns of these agencies are adequately addressed. Important habitat and habitat components include nesting, breeding, and foraging areas, important spawning grounds, migratory routes, migratory stopover areas, oak woodlands, vernal pools, wildlife movement corridors, and other unique wildlife habitats (e.g., alkali scrub) critical to protecting and sustaining wildlife populations.

Policy OS-E.2 The County shall require adequate buffer zones between construction activities and significant wildlife resources, including both onsite habitats that are purposely avoided and significant habitats that are adjacent to the project site, in order to avoid the degradation and disruption of critical life cycle activities such as breeding and feeding. The width of the buffer zone should vary depending on the location, species, etc. A final determination shall be made based on informal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and/or the California Department of Fish and Game.

Policy OS-E.3 The County shall require development in areas known to have particular value for wildlife to be carefully planned and, where possible, located so that the value of the habitat for wildlife is maintained.

- Policy OS-E.4 The County shall encourage private landowners to adopt sound wildlife habitat management practices, as recommended by the California Department of Fish and Game officials and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Policy OS-E.5 The County shall support preservation of habitats of rare, threatened, endangered, and/or other special-status species including fisheries. The County shall consider developing a formal Habitat Conservation Plan in consultation with Federal and State agencies, as well as other resource conservation organizations. Such a plan should provide a mechanism for the acquisition and management of lands that support special-status species.
- Policy OS-E.6 The County shall ensure the conservation of large, continuous expanses of native vegetation to provide suitable habitat for maintaining abundant and diverse wildlife populations, as long as this preservation does not threaten the economic well-being of the county.
- Policy OS-E.7 The County shall continue to closely monitor pesticide use in areas adjacent to habitats of special-status plants and animals.
- Policy OS-E.8 The County shall promote effective methods of pest (e.g., ground squirrel) control on croplands bordering sensitive habitat that do not place special-status species at risk, such as the San Joaquin kit fox.
- Policy OS-E.9 Prior to approval of discretionary development permits, the County shall require, as part of any required environmental review process, a biological resources evaluation of the project site by a qualified biologist. The evaluation shall be based upon field reconnaissance performed at the appropriate time of year to determine the presence or absence of significant resources and/or special-status plants or animals. Such evaluation will consider the potential for significant impact on these resources and will either identify feasible mitigation measures or indicate why mitigation is not feasible.
- Policy OS-E.10 The County shall support State and Federal programs to acquire significant fish and wildlife habitat areas for permanent protection and/or passive recreation use.
- Policy OS-E.11 The County shall protect significant aquatic habitats against excessive water withdrawals that could endanger special-status fish and wildlife or would interrupt normal migratory patterns.
- Policy OS-E.12 The County shall ensure the protection of fish and wildlife habitats from environmentally-degrading effluents originating from mining and construction activities that are adjacent to aquatic habitats.

Policy OS-E.13 The County should protect to the maximum extent practicable wetlands, riparian habitat, and meadows since they are recognized as essential habitats for birds and wildlife.

Policy OS-E.14 The County shall seek to preserve and protect identified wildlife corridors along the San Joaquin River and shall coordinate such efforts with the San Joaquin River Conservancy.

Policy OS-E.15 The County shall, in coordination with the San Joaquin River Conservancy, seek to protect natural reserve areas in the San Joaquin River Parkway, principally in those areas adjoining the wildlife corridor along the river where the largest acreages of highest quality habitat exist.

Policy OS-E.16 The County should preserve, to the maximum extent practicable, significant wildlife migration routes such as the North Kings Deer Herd migration corridors and fawn production areas.

Policy OS-E.17 Areas that have unusually high value for fish and wildlife propagation should be preserved in a natural state to the maximum possible extent.

Policy OS-E.18 The County should preserve, to the maximum possible extent, areas defined as habitats for rare or endangered animal and plant species in a natural state consistent with State and Federal endangered species laws.

Policy OS-E.19 The County should preserve areas identified as habitats for rare or endangered plant and animal species primarily through the use of open space easements and appropriate zoning that restrict development in these sensitive areas.

Implementation Programs

Program OS-E.A The County shall compile inventories of ecologically significant resource areas, including unique natural areas, wetlands, riparian areas, and habitats for special-status plants and animals from existing data sources. The inventories shall be presented when area plans, specific plans, or other project development proposals are considered by the County. The classification system shall be based on the California Wildlife Habitats Relationships (WHR) system and shall identify appropriate buffer zones around the identified resource areas in order to account for periodic, seasonal, or ecological changes. The maps shall be revised on a regular basis to reflect the availability of new information from other agencies, changes in definition, or any other changes. (See Policies OS-E.1, OS-E.2, and OS-E.5)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department

Time frame: Ongoing

Program OS-E.B The County shall maintain current maps that indicate the extent of significant habitat for important fish and game species, as these maps are made available by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). The relative importance of these game species shall be determined by the County, in consultation with CDFG, based on relevant ecological, recreational, and economic considerations. These maps shall be used by the County to evaluate proposed area plans, specific plans, and any other project development proposals to determine the compatibility of development with maintenance and enhancement of important fish and game species. (See Policy OS-E.2)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department

Time frame: Ongoing

F. VEGETATION

Beyond providing habitat for wildlife as addressed in the two previous sections, Fresno County's native vegetation such as oak woodlands must be managed to maintain its diversity and health for ecological as well as aesthetic reasons.

Policies in this section seek to protect native vegetation resources primarily on private land within the county.

Related policies are included in Section OS-A, Water Resources; Section OS-B, Forest Resources; Section OS-D, Wetland and Riparian Areas; Section OS-E, Fish and Wildlife Habitat; and Section LU-C, River Influence Areas.

Goal OS-F To preserve and protect the valuable vegetation resources of Fresno County.

Policies

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| Policy OS-F.1 | The County shall encourage landowners and developers to preserve the integrity of existing terrain and natural vegetation in visually-sensitive areas such as hillsides and ridges, and along important transportation corridors, consistent with fire hazard and property line clearing requirements. |
| Policy OS-F.2 | The County shall require developers to use native and compatible non-native plant species, especially drought-resistant species, to the extent possible, in fulfilling landscaping requirements imposed as conditions of discretionary permit approval or for project mitigation. |
| Policy OS-F.3 | The County shall support the preservation of significant areas of natural vegetation, including, but not limited to, oak woodlands, riparian areas, and vernal pools. |
| Policy OS-F.4 | The County shall ensure that landmark trees are preserved and protected whenever possible. |
| Policy OS-F.5 | The County shall establish procedures for identifying and preserving rare, threatened, and endangered plant species that may be adversely affected by public or private development projects. As part of this process, the County shall require, as part of the environmental review process, a biological resources evaluation of the project site by a qualified biologist. The evaluation shall be based on field reconnaissance performed at the appropriate time of year to determine the presence or absence of significant plant resources and/or special-status plant species. Such evaluation shall consider the potential for significant impact on these resources and shall either identify feasible mitigation measures or indicate why mitigation is not feasible. |
| Policy OS-F.6 | The County shall require that development on hillsides be limited to maintain valuable natural vegetation, especially forests and open grasslands, and to control erosion. |

- Policy OS-F.7 The County should encourage landowners to maintain natural vegetation or plant suitable vegetation along fence lines, drainage and irrigation ditches and on unused or marginal land for the benefit of wildlife.
- Policy OS-F.8 The County shall support the continued use of prescribed burning to mimic the effects of natural fires to reduce fuel volumes and associated fire hazards to human residents and to enhance the health of biotic communities.
- Policy OS-F.9 The County shall require that new developments preserve natural woodlands to the maximum extent possible.
- Policy OS-F.10 The County shall promote the preservation and management of oak woodlands by encouraging landowners to follow the Fresno County Oak Management Guidelines shown below and to prepare an Oak Management Plan for their property.

Fresno County Oak Woodlands Management Guidelines (Policy OS-F.10)

1. When Building Within Oak Woodlands:

- Develop an Oak Woodland Management Plan to retain existing oaks, preserve agriculture, retain wildlife corridors, and enhance soil and water conservation practices.
- Avoid tree root compaction during construction by limiting heavy equipment in root zones.
- Carefully plan roads, cuts and fills, building foundations, and septic systems to avoid damage to tree roots. Design roads and consolidate utility services to minimize erosion and sedimentation to downstream sources. Also, consider reseeded any disturbed ground.
- Avoid landscaping which requires irrigation within ten (10) feet of the trunk of an existing oak tree to prevent root rot.
- Consider replacing trees whose removal during construction was avoidable.
- Use fire-inhibiting and drought-tolerant and oak-compatible landscaping wherever possible.

2. Take Steps to Increase Fire Safety on Wooded Parcels:

- Recognize fire as a natural feature of the oak woodland landscape and plan accordingly.
- Set up a continuous management program as a part of your Oak Woodland Management Plan to maintain a fire-safe property environment.
- Identify and manage trees to be fire-safe.
- Recognize the impact of steep slopes on fire safety.
- Develop a fire-safe and oak-friendly landscape plan for your home or business.
- Create "Defensible Space" around buildings. Defensible space is that area which lies between a structure and an oncoming wildfire where the vegetation has been modified to reduce the wildfire threat and which provides an opportunity for firefighters to safely defend a structure.

3. When Implementing Range Improvement Practices in Oak Woodlands:

- When using prescribed fire as a range improvement practice, obtain professional assistance to maximize benefits and minimize risk.
- When converting oak woodlands to other agricultural uses, consider incorporating an oak retention component or a conservation easement in your Oak Woodland Management Plan.
- Develop water sources--ponds, troughs, seeps, and springs for livestock and wildlife.

4. When Harvesting Oaks for Fuel or Range Improvement, Plan Your Harvest to:

- Maintain an average canopy cover of 10 to 30 percent depending on site, elevation, and precipitation.
- Retain some oak trees of all sizes and species represented at the site and in clusters where possible.
- When safety permits, leave old hollow trees and those actively being used for nesting, roosting, or feeding.
- Where low fire risk and aesthetics allow, pile limbs and brush to provide wildlife cover.
- Where commercial or extensive harvest is being contemplated, seek professional advice.

Adopted by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors on March 10, 1998 (Resolution # 98-150).

Implementation Programs

Program OS-F.A

The County shall prepare and maintain an updated list of State and Federal rare, threatened, and endangered plant species known or suspected to occur in the county. The following other uncommon or special-status species which occur or may occur in the County should also be included on the list: 1) plant species included in the California Native Plant Society's Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California; and 2) species of special concern as designated by California Department of Fish and Game. In addition to updating the list as new information becomes available, the list should be reviewed and amended at least once every two years. (See Policy OS-F.5)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 00-01; every two years thereafter

Program OS-F.B The County shall make the Fresno County Oak Management Guidelines and other educational resources available to landowners located in oak woodland habitat. (See Policy OS-F.10)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: Ongoing

G. AIR QUALITY

Air quality in Fresno County is a key element in defining the quality of life for county residents. Air pollution adversely affects human health, degrades the natural and built environments, causes agricultural losses, and changes the earth's climate. Air quality is a global problem that must be addressed by all levels of government.

The linkages between land use patterns, transportation systems, and air quality are the primary means for local governments to address air quality issues. The main method of local control over air quality in Fresno County is the reduction of the number of vehicular miles traveled (VMT) and resulting vehicular emissions. Thus, Fresno's air quality strategy focuses on ways to reduce air pollutants by promoting compact efficient development patterns that support transit use, walking, and bicycling as alternatives to single occupant vehicle use. This type of land use based strategy, however, poses a challenge for a county such as Fresno whose jurisdiction is primarily rural. The primary role for Fresno County in this strategy is to direct development to population centers; to encourage jobs-housing balance; to avoid proliferation of scattered low-density residential development projects; and to minimize further parcelization and designation of land for rural-residential development.

Policies and implementation programs addressing air quality that are directly related to land use and transportation issues are included in the Land Use Element and the Transportation and Circulation Element as, as described below.

Land Use Related Air Quality Policies (Land Use Element)

The land use related air quality policies address four objectives:

- a. To keep growth in existing development areas;
2. To encourage compact development;
3. To encourage mixed-use development; and
- b. To encourage pedestrian and transit-oriented development in urban areas.

Transportation Related Air Quality Policies (Transportation and Circulation Element)

The main air quality-related transportation strategy is to make transportation infrastructure improvements that will reduce motor vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled and encourage an increase in the share of non-automobile trips. Policies addressing this strategy are included in the Transportation and Circulation Element. These policies address the following aims:

- a. To plan for a multi-modal transportation system that meets community mobility needs, improves air quality, and shifts travel away from single-occupant automobiles to less-polluting transportation modes such as transit, carpools, bicycling, and walking;
- b. To ensure that transportation plans, programs, and projects will not impair efforts to meet air quality standards;
- c. To ensure that the design of streets, sidewalks, and bike paths/routes within new development encourages walking and biking;
- d. To ensure that the design of streets is compatible with present and future transit needs;
- e. To plan an extensive system of bikeways and pedestrian paths in urban areas to encourage bicycle and pedestrian trips that replace vehicular trips;
- f. To plan for future transit needs in the region which may include light rail, commuter rail, or expanded bus service, as appropriate; and
- g. To facilitate rural transit, paratransit, and carpooling to provide a range of transportation options from the small rural communities to the major cities in the county.

Policies in this section address assessing and mitigating air quality impacts; coordination and cooperation with local jurisdictions on regional air quality issues; employer-based trip reduction programs; establishment of congestion management and transportation control measures; and reduction of toxic and hazardous emissions, particulate matter, and fugitive dust. Related policies are included in Section TR-A, Streets and Highways; Section TR-B, Transit; Section TR-C, Transportation System Management; Section TR-D, Bicycle Facilities; and Section LU-F, Urban Development Patterns.

Goal OS-G To improve air quality and minimize the adverse effects of air pollution in Fresno County.

Policies

Environmental Assessment and Mitigation

- Policy OS-G.1 The County shall develop standard methods for determining and mitigating project air quality impacts and related thresholds of significance for use in environmental documents. The County will do this in conjunction with the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (SJVUAPCD) and the cities in Fresno County.
- Policy OS-G.2 The County shall ensure that air quality impacts identified during the CEQA review process are fairly and consistently mitigated. The County shall require projects to comply with the County's adopted air quality impact assessment and mitigation procedures.

Coordination and Cooperation

- Policy OS-G.3 The County shall participate with cities, surrounding counties, and regional agencies to address cross-jurisdictional and regional transportation and air quality issues.

Policy OS-G.4 The County shall consult with the SJVUAPCD during CEQA review for projects that require air quality impact analysis and ensure that the SJVUAPCD is on the distribution list for all CEQA documents.

Policy OS-G.5 The County shall participate with cities, surrounding counties, and regional agencies in the San Joaquin Valley in efforts to promote consistent air quality programs and implementation programs to the extent possible (e.g., transportation control measures, trip reduction ordinances, indirect source programs, etc.).

Integrated Planning

Policy OS-G.6 The County shall require all Fresno County transportation improvement projects that increase capacity by adding additional through lanes to be included in regional transportation plans and be consistent with the air quality goals and policies of the General Plan.

Public Facilities/Operation

Policy OS-G.7 The County shall develop and implement employer-based trip reduction programs for County employees.

Policy OS-G.8 The County shall encourage its departments to consider telecommuting programs as a trip reduction strategy.

Policy OS-G.9 The County fleet vehicle operators shall implement vehicle replacement practices that place a priority on replacement of older higher-emission vehicles and on purchasing new vehicles with engines using best available technologies and advanced fuels where feasible, consistent with cost-effective management of the program.

Policy OS-G.10 The County shall support the use of teleconferencing in lieu of employee travel to conferences and meetings when feasible.

Congestion Management/Transportation Control Measures

Policy OS-G.11 The County shall encourage the establishment of public/private partnerships to develop satellite and neighborhood work centers for telecommuting.

Toxic and Hazardous Emissions

Policy OS-G.12 The County shall continue, through its land use planning processes, to avoid inappropriate location of residential uses and sensitive receptors in relation to uses that include but are not limited to industrial and manufacturing uses and any other use which have the potential for creating a hazardous or nuisance effect.

Particulate Matter/Fugitive Dust

- Policy OS-G.13 The County shall include fugitive dust control measures as a requirement for subdivision maps, site plans, and grading permits. This will assist in implementing the SJVUAPCD's particulate matter of less than ten (10) microns (PM₁₀) regulation (Regulation VIII). Enforcement actions can be coordinated with the Air District's Compliance Division.
- Policy OS-G.14 The County shall require all access roads, driveways, and parking areas serving new commercial and industrial development to be constructed with materials that minimize particulate emissions and are appropriate to the scale and intensity of use.
- Policy OS-G.15 The County shall continue to work to reduce PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions from County-maintained roads by considering shoulder treatments for dust control as part of road reconstruction projects.

Woodburning

- Policy OS-G.16 The County shall encourage the installation of low-emission, EPA-certified fireplace inserts and/or wood stoves, pellet stoves, or natural gas heating appliances in lieu of normal open hearth fireplaces in new houses.

Implementation Programs

- Program OS-G.A The County shall review the Guide for Assessing and Mitigating Air Quality Impacts published by the SJVUAPCD and adopt procedures for performing air quality impact analysis and mitigation measures with any modifications deemed appropriate. (See Policy OS-G.1)
- Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 02-03
- Program OS-G.B The County shall adopt a package of programs to reduce its employees' work-related vehicular trips.
- Responsibility: County Administrative Officers
Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 02-03
- Program OS-G.C The County shall amend its Subdivision and Grading Ordinances and Development Standards to address dust control measures for new development, access roads, and parking areas. (See Policies OS-G.13 and OS-G.14)
- Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Public Works Department
Time Frame: FY 02-03

RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

H. PARKS AND RECREATION

Fresno County has a wide variety of recreational resources. The county contains regional parks, State and national parks, national forests, wilderness areas, and other resources. The primary responsibility for development and maintenance of the County park system lies with the County's General Services Department.

Policies in this section seek to enhance recreational opportunities in the county by encouraging the further development of public and private recreation lands, and requiring development to help fund additional parks and recreation facilities. Related policies are included in Section LU-C, River Influence Areas; Section OS-I, Recreational Trails; and Section OS-K, Scenic Resources.

Goal OS-H To designate land for and promote the development and expansion of public and private recreational facilities to serve the needs of residents and visitors.

Policies

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| Policy OS-H.1 | The County shall promote the continued and expanded use of national forest, national park, and other recreational areas to meet the recreational needs of County residents. |
| Policy OS-H.2 | The County shall strive to maintain a standard of five (5) to eight (8) acres of County-owned improved parkland per one thousand (1,000) residents in the unincorporated areas. |
| Policy OS-H.3 | The County shall require the dedication of land and/or payment of fees, in accordance with local authority and State law (e.g., Quimby Act), to ensure funding for the acquisition and development of public recreation facilities. The fees are to be set and adjusted, as necessary, to provide for a level of funding that meets the actual cost to provide for all the public parkland and park development needs generated by new development. |
| Policy OS-H.4 | The County shall consider the use of existing entities or the creation of assessment districts, County service areas, community facilities districts, or other types of districts to generate funds for the acquisition and development of parkland and/or historical properties as development occurs in the county. |
| Policy OS-H.5 | The County shall encourage Federal, State, and local agencies currently providing recreation facilities to maintain, at a minimum, and improve, if possible, their current levels of service. |
| Policy OS-H.6 | The County shall encourage the development of parks near public facilities such as schools, community halls, libraries, museums, prehistoric sites, and open space areas and shall encourage joint-use agreements whenever possible. |
| Policy OS-H.7 | The County shall encourage the development of public and private campgrounds and recreational vehicle parks where environmentally appropriate. The intensity of such development should not exceed the environmental carrying capacity of the site and its surroundings. |

- Policy OS-H.8 The County shall encourage development of private recreation facilities to reduce demands on public agencies.
- Policy OS-H.9 The County shall plan for the further development of the Friant-Millerton area as a recreation corridor. (See Policy LU-H.8, Administration)
- Policy OS-H.10 The County shall develop a recreation plan for the Kings River as a part of the update to the Kings River Regional Plan. The plan shall be funded with mining mitigation fees. (See Policy OS-C.10 and Program LU-C.A).
- Policy OS-H.11 The County shall support the policies of the San Joaquin River Parkway Plan to protect the San Joaquin River as an aquatic habitat, recreational amenity, aesthetic resource, and water source (See Policies OS-A.7).
- Policy OS-H.12 The County shall in conjunction with the San Joaquin River Conservancy rehabilitate and improve existing recreation areas and facilities along the San Joaquin River at the earliest possible time, particularly Lost Lake and Skaggs Bridge Regional Parks.
- Policy OS-H.13 The County shall encourage the development of recreation facilities in western Fresno County.
- Policy OS-H.14 The County shall utilize retention-recharge basins as open space areas for parks and recreation purposes.

Implementation Programs

- Program OS-H.A The County shall work with local, State, and Federal agencies to complete a comprehensive inventory of all parks and recreation areas and services in the county and to identify other areas suitable for park acquisition and development as funds permit. The County shall consider preparation of a County park and recreation master plan to provide a policy framework for independent implementation by the cooperating agencies. (See Policies OS-H.1 through OS-H.3)
- Responsibility: General Services Department
Time Frame: FY 01-02; 02-03
- Program OS-H.B As new development occurs, the County shall consider contracting with existing entities or forming county service areas (CSAs) that have the authority to receive dedications or grants of land or funds, plus the ability to charge fees for acquisition, development, and maintenance of parks, open space, and riding, hiking, and bicycle trails. (See Policy OS-H.4)
- Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: Ongoing

I. RECREATIONAL TRAILS

While many Fresno County communities have bikeways that provide both local and regional service, pedestrian and recreational (including bicycling, equestrian, and hiking) facilities are more localized and do not form a contiguous regional system. Recreational trails are trails designed primarily for the recreational use of bicyclists, pedestrians, or equestrians, or any combination thereof. They are intended to be primarily off-street facilities, although some recreational trails designed for bicycle use only may be on-street bikeways.

Policies in this section seek to enhance recreational opportunities in the county by encouraging the development of a countywide trail system. Related policies are included in Section TR-D, Bicycle Facilities, and OS-C, Mineral Resources.

Goal OS-I To develop a system of hiking, riding, and bicycling trails and paths suitable for active recreation and transportation and circulation.

Policies

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| Policy OS-I.1 | The County shall develop a countywide Recreational Trail Master Plan, integrated with existing County facilities, similar facilities in cities and adjoining counties, and on State and Federal land. The recreational trail system shall be oriented to providing safe, off-street access from urban areas to regional recreation facilities of countywide importance. |
| Policy OS-I.2 | The County shall develop recreational trails in County recreation areas. |
| Policy OS-I.3 | The County shall encourage the preservation or advance acquisition of desirable trail routes, including linear open space along rail corridors and other public easements. |
| Policy OS-I.4 | The County shall require that adequate rights-of-way or easements are provided for designated trails or bikeways as a condition of land development approvals. |
| Policy OS-I.5 | The County shall provide for the separation of different types of users in multiple-purpose trail corridors when desirable for safety reasons or trail type needs. |
| Policy OS-I.6 | The County shall coordinate development of its Recreational Trail Master Plan with the San Joaquin River Conservancy concerning the proposed multi-purpose trail between Highway 99 and Friant Dam in the San Joaquin River Parkway. |
| Policy OS-I.7 | The County shall maintain and enforce regulations prohibiting the use of all County-developed and maintained recreational trails by motorized vehicles, except for maintenance vehicles. |

- Policy OS-I.8** The County shall use the following principles in the siting of recreational trails:
- a. Recreational trail corridors should connect urban areas to regional recreational amenities, follow corridors of scenic or aesthetic interest, or provide loop connection to such routes or amenities;
 - b. Recreational trails should be located where motor vehicle crossings can be eliminated or minimized;
 - c. Recreational trails should provide for connectivity to other transportation modes such as bus stops, train stations and park-and-ride sites when feasible to enhance intermodal transportation opportunities; and
 - d. Recreational trails should provide for connectivity to the on-street walkway and bikeway network when feasible to enhance non-motorized transportation opportunities.
5. Recreational trails shall whenever possible make maximum use of existing public land and rights-of-way.
- Policy OS-I.9** The County shall follow design guidelines published by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the Highway Design Manual, Chapter 1000 (Bikeway Planning and Design), in designing and constructing recreational trails.
- Policy OS-I.10** Pending adoption of a Recreational Trail Master Plan, the County shall review development proposals for consistency with and accessibility to the trails in the Conceptual Recreational Trail Corridor Map. (See Figure OS-1 and text box below; see also Policy OS-I.1)

Fresno County Conceptual Recreational Trail List (continued) (See Figure OS-1) (Policy OS-I.10)	
1. Millerton Trail	Multiple purpose trail and bikeway along the San Joaquin River/Friant Road corridor from Alluvial Avenue to Friant Road to Friant Dam.
2. Friant-Kern Trail	Multiple purpose trail along the Friant-Kern Canal from Millerton Lake to Orange Cove/Tulare County Line.
3. Copper-Auberry Trail	Multiple purpose trail from Copper Road at Friant Road to Auberry Road to the Friant-Kern Canal.
4. Auberry Bikeway	Bikeway from Millerton Road at the Friant-Kern Canal to Auberry Road to the Friant-Kern Canal.
5. Enterprise Trail	Multiple purpose trail using portions of Copper Avenue, Minnewawa Avenue, the Enterprise Canal, and Shaw Avenue to the Friant Kern Canal.
6. Dry Creek Trail	Multiple purpose trail along Dry Creek between the Enterprise Canal and Minnewawa Avenue.
7. Piedra Trail	Multiple purpose trail and bikeway on Piedra Road between Minkler and Pine Flat Dam, possibly also using the old railroad grade and Elwood Road.
8. Belmont Trail	Multiple purpose trail and bikeway along the abandoned Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way (McKenzie Avenue alignment) between Fine and Clovis Avenues and along Belmont Avenue between Clovis Avenue and the Friant-Kern Canal.

Fresno County Conceptual Recreational Trail List (continued) (See Figure OS-1) (Policy OS-I.10)	
9. Reed Bikeway	Bikeway along Reed Avenue between Reedley and Minkler.
10. Rainbow Bikeway	Bikeway between Reedley and Centerville along Highway 180, Rainbow Road, Newmark Avenue, the Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way, and River Road.
11. Orange Cove Trail	Equestrian-hiking trail between Orange Cove and Navelencia along the abandoned Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad right-of-way.
12. Golden State Bikeway	Bikeway between Fresno and Kingsburg along Golden State Boulevard.
13. Roeding-Kearney Bikeway	Bikeway from Roeding Park to the Kearney Trail at the intersection of Kearney Boulevard and Hughes, via Hughes, Neilsen, and Pacific.
14. Kearney Trail	Multiple purpose trail along Kearney Boulevard between Hughes Avenue and Madera Avenue
15. Skaggs Bridge Trail	Multiple purpose trail along Madera Avenue between Whites Bridge Road and the San Joaquin River.
16. California Aqueduct Trail	Multiple purpose trail along the California Aqueduct in Fresno County.
17. Nees Bikeway	Bikeway along Nees Avenue between Firebaugh and the California Aqueduct.
18. Delta-Mendota Trail	Multiple purpose trail along the Delta-Mendota Canal and the San Luis Drain from Firebaugh to Belmont Avenue.
19. Los Gatos Creek Trail	Multiple purpose trail along Los Gatos and Wartham Creeks from Los Gatos Creek County Park to Warthan Creek and Highway 198.
20. Van Ness Trail	Multiple purpose trail along Van Ness Boulevard between Shaw Avenue and the San Joaquin River bluff area.
21. San Joaquin Bluff Trail	Multiple purpose trail along the San Joaquin River bluffs from Highway 99 to Woodward Park.
22. San Joaquin River Trail	Equestrian-hiking trail from Millerton Lake to Italian Bar Road at Redinger Lake, generally along the San Joaquin River.
23. Clovis/Pinedale Railroad Corridor Trail	Multiple purpose trail along the Clovis/Pinedale Railroad right-of-way.

- Policy OS-I.11 The County shall seek the provision of recreation trails in future foothill and mountain developments.
- Policy OS-I.12 The County shall encourage communication and cooperation with the cities of the county, the Fresno County Council of Governments, and other agencies in the county by referring proposed trail projects for review and comment.
- Policy OS-I.13 The County shall actively seek all possible financial assistance for planning, acquisition, construction, and maintenance of trails when such funding does not divert funds available for preservation and improvement of the road system.
- Policy OS-I.14 The Fresno County General Services Department shall maintain trails located within County parks, along but separated from the road way, along irrigation canals, flood control channels, abandoned railroad rights-of-way or easements, utility easements, and along flood plains.
- Policy OS-I.15 The Fresno County Public Works Department shall maintain recreational trails located within the road right-of-way as integral parts of the roadway.
- Policy OS-I.16 The County shall encourage public/private partnerships to implement and maintain trails.

Implementation Programs

Program OS-I.A The County shall prepare a Recreational Trails Master Plan for a countywide trail system that identifies appropriate corridors and the design of the trails in the corridors based on the criteria listed in the policies of this section. The Recreational Trail Corridor Map (Figure OS-1) and Conceptual Recreational Trail List shall be used as a starting point for the master plan process. (See Policies OS-I.1 and OS-I.10)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 02-03

Program OS-I.B The County shall investigate the potential of various land use controls for reserving areas for trails such as the acquisition of easements, open space and floodplain zoning, and subdivision control. (See Policies OS-I.3 and OS-I.4)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 02-03

Program OS-I.C The County shall enact an ordinance to prohibit the use of recreational trails by all motorized vehicles except maintenance vehicles, regulate users on multiple purpose paths, and protect the interests of property adjacent to trails. (See Policy OS-I.5)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 01-02

J. HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, AND GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Fresno County's history includes at least five indigenous Native American tribes and Spanish, Mexican, and American colonization. There are many archeological and historic sites and a large stock of historically significant buildings and landmarks in the county. The county also contains several unique geological features and geological resources of bygone eras.

Policies in this section seek to preserve the historical, archeological, paleontological, geological, and cultural resources of the county through development review, acquisition, encouragement of easements, coordination with other agencies and groups, and other methods.

Goal OS-J To identify, protect, and enhance Fresno County's important historical, archeological, paleontological, geological, and cultural sites and their contributing environment.

Policies

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Policy OS-J.1 | The County shall require that discretionary development projects, as part of any required CEQA review, identify and protect important historical, archeological, paleontological, and cultural sites and their contributing environment from damage, destruction, and abuse to the maximum extent feasible. Project-level mitigation shall include accurate site surveys, consideration of project alternatives to preserve archeological and historic resources, and provision for resource recovery and preservation when displacement is unavoidable. |
| Policy OS-J.2 | The County shall, within the limits of its authority and responsibility, maintain confidentiality regarding the locations of archeological sites in order to preserve and protect these resources from vandalism and the unauthorized removal of artifacts. |
| Policy OS-J.3 | The County shall solicit the views of the local Native American community in cases where development may result in disturbance to sites containing evidence of Native American activity and/or sites of cultural importance. |
| Policy OS-J.4 | The County shall maintain an inventory of all sites and structures in the County determined to be of historical significance (Index of Historic Properties in Fresno County). |
| Policy OS-J.5 | The County shall support the registration by property owners and others of cultural resources in appropriate landmark designations (i.e., National Register of Historic Places, California Historical Landmarks, Points of Historical Interest, or Local Landmark). |
| Policy OS-J.6 | The County shall provide for the placement of historical markers or signs on adjacent County roadways and major thoroughfares to attract and inform visitors of important historic resource sites. If such sites are open to the public, the County shall ensure that access is controlled to prevent damage or vandalism. |

Policy OS-J.7	The County shall use the State Historic Building Code and existing legislation and ordinances to encourage preservation of cultural resources and their contributing environment.
Policy OS-J.8	The County shall support efforts of other organizations and agencies to preserve and enhance historic resources for educational and cultural purposes through maintenance and development of interpretive services and facilities at County recreational areas and other sites.
Policy OS-J.9	In approving new development, the County shall ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that the location, siting, and design of any project be subordinate to significant geologic resources.
Policy OS-J.10	The County shall encourage property owners to enter into open space easements for the protection of unique geologic resources.
Policy OS-J.11	The County shall consider purchasing park sites for the purpose of preserving unique geologic resources for public enjoyment.
Policy OS-J.12	The County should encourage the inclusion of unique geologic resources on the National Registry of Natural Landmarks.
Policy OS-J.13	The County shall encourage State and Federal agencies to purchase significant geologic resources for permanent protection.

Implementation Programs

Program OS-J.A The County shall adopt and implement an ordinance to protect and preserve significant archaeological, historical, and geological resources. The ordinance shall provide for implementation of applicable development conditions, open space easements, tax incentives, related code revisions and other measures as needed.

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 02-03

K. SCENIC RESOURCES

Fresno County encompasses a diverse landscape ranging from valley grasslands to high mountain peaks. The scenic qualities of the area are an important component of the quality of life in the county. Scenic resources also play an important role in the economic development of the region, including the expansion of tourism-based industries, and the locational decisions of businesses.

Policies in this section are intended to protect the scenic resources of the county and ensure that development enhances those resources through the identification of important scenic resources, development review, acquisition, encouragement of easements, coordination with other agencies and groups, and other methods. Related policies are included in OS-H, Parks and Recreation.

Goal OS-K To conserve, protect, and maintain the scenic quality of Fresno County and discourage development that degrades areas of scenic quality.

Policies

- Policy OS-K.1 The County shall encourage the preservation of outstanding scenic views, panoramas, and vistas wherever possible. Methods to achieve this may include encouraging private property owners to enter into open space easements for designated scenic areas.
- Policy OS-K.2 The County shall identify and map significant scenic resources within the County and shall develop a program to manage these resources.
- Policy OS-K.3 The County should preserve areas of natural scenic beauty and provide for public access to scenic vistas by purchasing sites for park use.
- Policy OS-K.4 The County should require development adjacent to scenic areas, vistas, and roadways to incorporate natural features of the site and be developed to minimize impacts to the scenic qualities of the site.

Implementation Programs

None indicated beyond existing programs.

L. SCENIC ROADWAYS

The retention of existing scenic qualities along roadways is an important part of the County's efforts to enhance the quality of life in the county. The County has a major responsibility for developing and maintaining a circulation system that facilitates the safe and efficient movement of goods and people. Concern for the maintenance of environmental quality and scenic resources also requires that emphasis be placed on the preservation and enhancement of visual amenities along roadways.

Policies in this section are intended to protect the scenic resources along roadways of the county by identifying, developing, and maintaining of scenic amenities along roads and highways in the county and ensuring that development enhances those resources. Related policies are included in Section TR-A, Streets and Highways, and Section OS-K, Scenic Resources.

- Goal OS-L** To conserve, protect, and maintain the scenic quality of land and landscape adjacent to scenic roads in Fresno County.

Policies

- Policy OS-L.1 The County designates a system of scenic roadways that includes landscaped drives, scenic drives, and scenic highways. Definitions and designated roadways are shown in the text box below. Figure OS-2 shows the locations of the designated roadways.
- Policy OS-L.2 The County shall manage designated landscaped drives and adjacent land based on the following principles:

- a. Maintenance and improvement of landscaped drives should be directed toward preserving and enhancing the quality of the landscape within the right-of-way. Where deemed necessary or desirable, the Board of Supervisors should, by resolution, assume responsibility for maintenance and improvement of landscaped drives; and
- b. Development of land adjoining landscaped drives should be planned and designed to preserve the quality and integrity of the roadside landscape.

Policy OS-L.3 The County shall manage the use of land adjacent to scenic drives and scenic highways based on the following principles:

- a. Timber harvesting within or adjacent to the right-of-way shall be limited to that which is necessary to maintain and enhance the quality of the forest;

Fresno County-Designated Scenic Roadways (*continued*)
(See Figure OS-2)
(Policy OS-I.1)

Fresno County Designated Landscaped Drives

Landscaped drives are roads bordered by mature and consistent landscaping that have areawide significance. County-designated landscaped drives include the following:

- Kearney Boulevard from Westlawn Avenue to the City of Fresno
- Van Ness Avenue from the City of Fresno to Palm Avenue at Shaw
- North Van Ness Boulevard from Shaw Avenue to the San Joaquin River
- Butler Avenue, Peach to Fowler
- Minnewawa Avenue, Kings Canyon to Central Canal

Fresno County Designated Scenic Drives

Scenic drives are two (2)-lane rural roads traversing land with outstanding natural scenic qualities and connecting with scenic highways. County-designated scenic drives include the following:

- Trimmer Springs Road from State Highway 180 to Trimmer, Maxson Road from Trimmer to Watts Valley Road, Watts Valley Road from Maxson Road to Pitman Hill Road, and Burrough Valley Road from Watts Valley Road to Tollhouse Road
- Piedra Road from State Highway 180 to Piedra
- Nicholas Road/Tollhouse Road from proposed State Highway 168 at Millerton Road to Dinkey Creek Road at Shaver Lake
- Dinkey Creek Road/McKinley Grove Road from proposed State Highway 168 to Courtright Reservoir
- Edison-Florence Lake Road from Huntington Lake to Florence Lake
- Blossom Trail Route
- Wild Flower Route

Fresno County Designated Scenic Highways

Scenic highways are highways that traverse land with unique or outstanding scenic quality or provide access to regionally significant scenic and recreational areas. County-designated scenic highways include the following:

- Proposed State Highway 168 from Friant-Kern Canal to Lodge Road

- State Highway 168 from Lodge Road to Pineridge
- Proposed State Highway 168 from Pineridge to Huntington Lake Road
- State Highway 168 from Huntington Lake Road to Huntington Lake
- State Highway 180 from Trimmer Springs road to the Tulare County Line
- State Highway 180 from Kings Canyon National Park boundary near General Grant Grove to Kings Canyon National Park boundary near Cedar Grove
- State Highway 198 from Interstate 5 Freeway to Monterey County line, excluding city of Coalinga
- Interstate 5 freeway within Fresno County
- Friant Road from city of Fresno to Lost Lake Road

- b. Proposed high voltage overhead transmission lines and towers shall be routed to minimize detrimental effects on scenic amenities visible from the right-of-way;
- c. Installation of signs visible from the right-of-way shall be limited to business identification signs, on-site real estate signs, and traffic control signs necessary to maintain safe traffic conditions. All billboards and other advertising structures shall be prohibited from location within view of the right-of-way;
- d. Intensive land development proposals including, but not limited to, subdivisions of more than four lots, commercial developments, and mobile home parks shall be designed to blend into the natural landscape and minimize visual scarring of vegetation and terrain. The design of said development proposals shall also provide for maintenance of a natural open space area two hundred (200) feet in depth parallel to the right-of-way. Modification of the setback requirement may be appropriate when any one of the following conditions exist:
 - 1) Topographic or vegetative characteristics preclude such a setback;
 - 2) Topographic or vegetative characteristics provide screening of buildings and parking areas from the right-of-way;
 - 3) Property dimensions preclude such a setback; or
 - 4) Development proposal involves expansion of an existing facility or an existing concentration of uses.
- e. Subdivision proposals shall be designed to minimize the number of right-of-way access drives;
- f. Developments involving concentration of commercial uses shall be designed to function as an integral unit with common parking areas and right-of-way access drives; and
- g. Outside storage areas associated with commercial activities shall be completely screened from view of the right-of-way with landscape plantings or artificial screens which harmonize with the natural landscape.

- Policy OS-L.4 The County shall require proposed new development along designated scenic roadways within urban areas and unincorporated communities to underground utility lines on and adjacent to the site of proposed development or, when this is infeasible, to contribute their fair share of funding for future undergrounding.
- Policy OS-L.5 The County road improvement projects involving designated scenic roadways shall be constructed to insure that consideration is given to preservation of ornamental trees consistent with public safety standards and accepted road design.
- Policy OS-L.6 The County shall request city, State, and Federal agencies to maintain County-designated landscaped drives, scenic drives, and scenic highways under their jurisdictions in a manner consistent with the goals and policies in this section.
- Policy OS-L.7 The County shall encourage the State of California to landscape urban freeway and highway routes which pass through Fresno County.
- Policy OS-L.8 The County shall encourage cities within Fresno County to develop complementary policies and principles to enhance the visual qualities of streets and highways within their boundaries.
- Policy OS-L.9 The County shall work with the Department of Transportation to pursue scenic highway designation from the State of California for the State highway segments eligible for such designation (including those listed in the text box below and any other segments added).

State Highways Eligible for Official Scenic Highway Designation (Policy OS-L.9)		
Route	Location (From/To)	Post Miles
168	Friant-Kern Canal/Huntington Lake	4.0-49.7
180	Near Minkler/Kings Canyon National Park Boundary Near Cedar Grove (Unconstructed Route)	70.0-112.1
198	SR 33/I-5 at SR 198/SR 33/Coalinga	22.6-26.8

Implementation Programs

Program OS-L.A The County, in cooperation with the Council of Fresno County Governments and the Association for the Beautification of Highway 99, shall participate in establishing a landscape master plan and design guidelines for the Highway 99 corridor. The plan and guidelines shall unify the design features of the Highway 99 corridor while recognizing the individuality of each community. (See Policies OS-L.7 and OS-L.8)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 03-04

Program OS-L.B The County shall work with the California Department of Transportation to apply for scenic highway designation for the State highway segments eligible for such designation, and take necessary steps for approval, including adoption of scenic corridor protection programs for eligible segments. (See Policy OS-L.9)

Responsibility: Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 03-04